

A Word from Our President

By Don King

An Invitation to Connect

As the frenetic days of summer become shorter, our thoughts may turn to revitalizing our professional lives.

In order to keep up with family, friends, and endless summer activities, we all seem to gladly put career development on the back burner when the weather warms. However, when the pools close, the baseball leagues wrap up another season, and the kids head back to school, we might consider how we can pump more life into our professional

activities.

This is where our STC chapter may enhance our career experiences.

At the past two summer board meetings, we have focused on how we can make the STC work for us. We have planned the development of programs that can help us gain critical knowledge and stay on the “cutting edge.” We have taken steps to improve communications by using a Web site and an e-mail listserv.

We have concluded that the way to increase

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Chapter News

Our last meeting

Robert Magrino, Online Information Specialist with Help Consultants of Cincinnati, Ohio, presented a PowerPoint presentation on using RoboHELP.

Magrino stepped us through the process of developing and implementing help information using the program.

Developing and Testing a User Interface

Lexmark’s Information Development group took its first step from technical writing to usability engineering.

The group was invited to participate in the design of a new product (on an incredibly tight schedule) and after the UI team did a tremendous amount of work identifying a customer-friendly design, the engineers went off to implement it.

At the next meeting of the Kentuckiana Chapter of STC, one of the technical writers on the UI team, Amanda Baldwin, will take us through their

process: defining customer types (personae), designing the product, and testing and re-testing the design.

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A Word from the Editor

Mike Walton

Welcome to a slightly different version of *Techniques*!

I say slightly different in that if you remove the color and the fact that you may be reading this via a PDF version on your computer, the organization of *Techniques* is slightly different.

Left to my own devices, I decided to put the president's column as the top story on the front page.

When you don't have the experience in the Kentuckiana Chapter of STC that previous editors such as Linda Stein and Jan Scarbrough have, it's a little more comfortable to nestle your own musing somewhere off the front page.

Speaking of experience, don't miss Jan's recap of some of the high points in chapter history on pages 4 and 5 (or what would be the center fold of the publication if it was printed out).

Speaking of printing the newsletter, that's a whole topic of its own. It may be a bit jarring for you to receive the newsletter this way, but let's roll with the times here.

I think there are a number of advantages to having the newsletter in PDF format.

- We're saving trees!
- We're saving postage!
- It allows color (even if it is just red and blue in this issue)!
- It's easier to put on our Web page.
- For those of us who like bigger letters, we can easily blow it up to a comfortable size.
- For those of us who like to feel paper between our fingers as we read *Techniques*, we can print it out at whatever size we want.

There actually are several other reasons why an electronic version of the newsletter makes sense. For example, I'm able to send Richard Kopp a version of the newsletter to proof in Quark at Purdue, so there should be fewer typos and other errors to interrupt your reading.

The newsletter can still be printed out for archiving purposes, but for those of us who have a hard time filing paper, just think how easy it will be to

archive your copy of *Techniques* on your hard drive and always have the information there at a moment's notice.

Remember seeing an interesting link in Web Watch? Hey, just pull up the last few issues and click on it. Hyperlinks should be embedded, but they may not work as planned yet. If they don't, just copy and paste the URL or e-mail address into the appropriate program.

I hope you like it, and if not, you are willing to give it a chance.

Print it out and fold it over if it bothers you to read it on the computer, or you're afraid to jump in the tub and read it on your laptop.

While you're thinking about *Techniques* and the changes in this issue, think about what you can contribute to future editions. I know what you're thinking, but no one has time to sit down and compose a column for one of our potential features including: Let's Get Technical; Trade Secrets; Picture This; Career Notes; and Back to Basics.

We're writers and you know this isn't rocket science! It makes a pleasing change from the tightly formatted writing we must all do. It can be fun!

Like every other editor before me, I will try to make sure that all the important information about your chapter gets into this newsletter.

I'd like to see the Talk Back feature take off and become a sounding board for ideas and suggestions. This feature is meant for technical questions and answers in following issues, but the dialog could extend to a "letters to the editor" kind of place. Write me at mwalton@techrepublic.com or mikewalton@mac.com if you want to contribute to it or any other feature.

Web Watch

The Kentuckiana Chapter of STC is at: <http://www.stc.org/region4/kty/kyhome.html>

Join the chapter's e-mail loop at: <http://www.onelist.com/community/kyinstc>

Member News

Featured Member: Don King

Our featured member in this issue is Don King, who is currently in his second term as President of the STC Kentuckiana Chapter. Don is a native of Louisville and a graduate of Trinity High School and the University of Louisville Speed Scientific School, where he earned a B.S. degree in mechanical engineering. While completing his degree, Don was offered a maintenance engineering position at a manufacturing facility of a major corporation in Louisville.



Don King He accepted that position, and worked for the company for nine years, eventually transitioning into project engineering.

While working as a project engineer, Don did a lot of technical writing in the form of project proposals and reports, preventive maintenance instructions, work procedures, and equipment specifications. He has always enjoyed writing, so he began to investigate the possibility of making a career of it. After a year and a half of research, he

took the leap and started his own technical communications firm. Since that time, Don has done work for manufacturers, “dot-coms,” and many small businesses. He has enjoyed the variety and the entrepreneurial adventure of building a successful business.

In addition to his technical communication projects, Don also has several artistic endeavors in the works. He is currently finishing his first screenplay, and hopes to break into the film industry in the future. Last year, he founded the Pyxis Writers Group for new writers. Finally, Don is also a singer, songwriter, and musician who occasionally performs in a duet at various venues in Louisville. He and his partner hope to begin recording their first CD later in the year.

When not writing or playing music, Don spends time with his wife, Maggie. She and Don enjoy long-distance bicycling and hope to ride in New Zealand some day. They also enjoy tennis, and are always looking for a good doubles match.

To contact Don, send him e-mail at: daking@awacian.com.

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member involvement is to prove that the chapter can be a valuable resource for professional development. However, at our last meeting, Mike Walton (our new Newsletter Editor) mentioned something we have never really seriously considered — fun. With all of our best intentions to make the chapter thrive by concentrating on its “bottom-line” value to each of us, we forgot about the importance of connections.

The best asset our chapter provides is a group of people who share with us the failures and successes of being technical communicators. Although at different levels and with varying areas of concentration, we are all on this common journey. We all know what it means to reach top speed on smooth pavement, and we have all hit the potholes on the bumpy road. Having each other gives us the opportunity to complain and celebrate the daily

grind we call technical communication.

Therefore, I officially invite each of you to come and share some time with us. Talk to us and share a meal. Tell us a story about that one client who took your business over the top, or the software package that crashed a gazillion times.

Let us know about your daily breakthroughs and tribulations. Share your knowledge with us, and take a pointer or two when you leave. We will chew on your ear a bit, and unload our gripes, as well. In the meantime, maybe we will learn what it means to truly connect with our fellow professionals.

Maybe we can even share a laugh or two, because we know that someone else is going through the same highs and lows that we encounter every day.

Who knows? Maybe we will all become good friends. Imagine that.

A Look at Our Past

By Jan Scarbrough

Excerpts of this article were first printed in the Fall 1996 issue of Techniques. I've revised it and brought it up-to-date.

This article contains some items of interest about the history of our chapter. I have used old chapter newsletters to jog my memory. It is not meant to be a comprehensive overview of the chapter, and I apologize in advance for not mentioning everyone and everything.

In February 1985, I was one of the technical writers who signed the petition to start the Kentuckiana Chapter. It was a small group back then, but enthusiastic.

This comes from the Louisville Chapter Newsletter, March 1985:

A Progress Report by Janice James

"As you can see, our chapter is progressing. We will soon have a full-fledged newsletter—one with a name and everything! Other committees are also beginning to take shape, but we still need your help."

"Our chapter now has 19 members, and we've received a \$100 start-up grant from national headquarters. In July, we can apply for 30 percent of our membership dues. So, the more members we attract before that time, the more money we'll receive."

That year's March meeting was held at Red Lobster, then located on Dutchman's Lane. The purpose of the meeting was to get to know everyone. Janis Young, in charge of the program, wrote: "We'll have a roundtable discussion to share our business experiences—where we are now and where we hope to be in the future. Please bring samples of your work to share and business cards to exchange with other members."

Sharing turned out to be one of the most popular programs at chapter meetings. Networking and

learning from others is one of the great things about STC.

By April 1985, the newsletter boldly announced "Goals set, committees in place, and we're off!" In this same newsletter, I found my first article—book reviews of two technical writing books!

Chapter officers were announced in the April 1985 newsletter:

Janice James, President, Amcor Computer Corp.

Janis Young, 1st Vice President, Amcor Computer Corp.

Ginny Smith, 2nd Vice President, Citizens Fidelity Bank

Barbara Zimlich, Secretary, Capital Holding Corp.

Stefanie Auslander, Treasurer, Freelance

How times and names of companies have changed!

By July 1985 we had an official title for our newsletter—Techniques—edited by Judy Mynhier from the Cobb Group. We had selected the Kentuckiana Chapter as our name, and we were planning a brochure. A software product reviewed in this issue was Microsoft's Word for the Mac, priced at \$150.

In those days, we met for dinner usually on Tuesday evenings. Mastersons near U of L became our "favorite" hang-out. On our anniversary in 1986, we hosted STC's President-elect Dick Wiegand, and the Region 4 Sponsor, Bill Leavitt.

I assumed the newsletter responsibility in April 1986. What a pathetic production! I had been at Devoe Paint for two years and was using a Lanier Word Processor. Personal computers were machines of the future, at least for my company. I suppose the reason Aavidar Graphics, Inc. and Vicki Keiser, agreed to produce the newsletter was because the layout looked so bad. What an improvement! In April 1987, Techniques won the

"Sharing turned out to be one of the most popular programs at chapter meetings. Networking and learning from others is one of the great things about STC."

Jan Scarbrough

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Achievement award in STC's Chapter Newsletter Contest. We won the Excellence award for two years, and in 1990, Techniques was honored with a Distinguished award, the very best newsletter in its category.

Although most of our meetings took place in Louisville, we tried to hold at least two meetings a year in Lexington. A memorable meeting in 1991 was our tour of Toyota in Georgetown. We belonged for several years to the Kentuckiana Data Processing Association, an organization of local data processing groups. We helped plan their supper meetings, usually held in March of every year.

In 1991 we ran our first local Student Technical Writing Competition. Our first place winner went on to receive an honorable mention in the International competition. We held the competition for several years until we could not find a volunteer to run it. Our chapter won special recognition from the Society for sponsoring this competition.

Throughout the years, Techniques has been a place where chapter officers have begged, badgered, and pleaded for help. Involved as I was as the editor, I saw newsletters from other chapters. In November 1989, I wrote an article comparing our STC chapter to others.

"What strikes me, as a reader of these chapter newsletters, is that, big or small, all local chapters are facing the same problem: how can they meet the needs of their members? To do so, they must depend on their members to become actively involved in chapter activities."

I went on to mention that the president of the 530-member Chicago Chapter was calling for volunteers.

So were the large chapters in Boston and

Houston. Finally I said: "The Kentuckiana Chapter is not different. In that, we can take comfort. Yet the challenges remain. To make this chapter responsive to its membership, we need more 'doers,' not just people who pay 'dues.'"

Wasn't that cute?

Unfortunately, the "theme" continued. In January 1993, the newsletter editors were writing: "We leaders in the Kentuckiana Chapter often bemoan the lack of participation among our members. The same people continue to volunteer over and over again. Other members never show up at meetings."

In 1995 the chapter failed to hold the International Student Technical Writing Competition.

The Lexington meeting in April of 1995 was poorly attended. By September 1996, the chapter was in danger of becoming "inactive." To salvage the chapter, plans were made to have one fall meeting and one spring meeting and print two issues of the newsletter.

Recent history has seen a growth in the Kentuckiana Chapter. We now teleconference our meetings, thanks to our corporate friends at Adware Systems, Inc. and LexMark Inc. In 1999 the Society presented our chapter with an Pacesetter award for this innovation.

Although we've not returned to monthly meetings or newsletters, we've had new members volunteer for critical leadership roles.

In 1999 we started a web site (<http://www.stc.org/region4/kty/kyhome.html>), and in the fall of 1999, the Kentuckiana Chapter gained its own e-mail loop through the free service <http://www.egroups.com>.

Now with 61 chapter members, the Kentuckiana Chapter is poised on the brink of a new century, looking to the future as we remember the past.

Kentuckiana Chapter of STC Important dates:

- February 1985—Petition signed to form chapter.
- March 1985—First chapter meeting. 19 members.
- April 1985—Chapter officers announced.
- July 1985—Techniques named.
- April 1987—Techniques wins Achievement award.
- 1988-89—Techniques wins Excellence award.
- 1990—Techniques wins Distinguished award.
- 1991—First local Student Technical Writing Competition.
- 1995-96—Chapter nearly becomes inactive.
- 1999—Chapter wins Pacesetter award.
- 1999—Web site and mail loop established. 61 members.

A Letter from Our National President

Hello, and Happy STC New Year! We are just coming off of another very successful STC Annual Conference, this 47th edition having taken place in Orlando!

If you were there, you would have to agree that it was the best yet in terms of the number and variety of sessions. Also, from my vantage, it appeared that everyone enjoyed all the conference activities from our opening keynote Thomas Koulopoulos through our side-splitting closing speaker Bill Herz!

If you were not at this year's 47th annual conference, it is not too soon to start planning to attend next year's edition, which will be in Chicago on May 13-16, 2001.

Like nothing else, the STC annual conference provides us with the setting to celebrate our profession, renew and make new professional acquaintances, and expand our technical and professional knowledge. For me, STC's 47th Annual Conference was most special in that I begin my one-year term at the "STC helm," a privilege for which I am most appreciative. And now that the conference is over, I look forward to getting to work on this year's agenda. And along these lines, I would like to introduce you to this year's elected STC board of directors:

Immediate Past President—Mary Wise, Washington DC Chapter

First Vice President—Judy Glick-Smith, Lone Star Chapter

Second Vice President—Ed See, Mid-Hudson Chapter

Secretary—Jean Gabriel, Orange County Chapter

Treasurer—Martha Collins, Suncoast Chapter

Director—Sponsor Region 1—Kitty Aughey, Rochester Chapter

Director—Sponsor Region 2—Chris Benz, Carolina Chapter

Director—Sponsor Region 3—Rob Houser, Atlanta Chapter

Director—Sponsor Region 4—Thea Teich, Southwestern Ohio Chapter

Director-Sponsor Region 5—Suzanna Laurent, Oklahoma Chapter

Director-Sponsor Region 6—Susan Jensen, Twin Cities Chapter

Director-Sponsor Region 7—Ellen Fenwick, Snake River Chapter

Director-Sponsor Region 8—Andrea Ames, Silicon Valley Chapter

In addition to the elected members, this year's STC board of directors includes seven assistants to the president, or APs for short. These individuals participate in the board meetings and also manage a subset of the Society-level committees. This year's APs are as follows:

Academic and Research Programs—Sandi Harner, Cedarville College Student Chapter

Communications—Lory Hawkes, Lone Star Chapter

Competitions—Michelle Ratcliffe, Suncoast Chapter

Conferences—Deb Sauer, Boston Chapter

External Relations—Laura Ramsey, Puget Sound Chapter
Professional Development—Carolyn Watt, Toronto Chapter

Special Interest Groups (SIGs)—Ray Urgo

All of us are going to be very busy over the summer, helping to advance this year's objectives, and, of course, preparing for the Fall 2000 meeting of the STC board.

This year, the Fall board meeting is to be held on September 14-17, 2000 in Winnipeg, MB, hosted by the Manitoba Chapter.

With the exception of an executive session, all STC board of director meetings are open to all members. So, if you are in the area, please stop by. (Location details will be forthcoming!)

The theme of the 2000-2001 STC year is Providing Value. Needless to say, all of the efforts to make our organization successful takes the efforts of literally hundreds of individuals-individuals just like you!

If there is an area of STC at the Society level that is of interest to you, let me or another member of the board know. Or, if you just want to drop me a line, my e-mail address is onwritetrk@aol.com.

My personal philosophy is to "take what you do seriously, but don't take yourself too seriously." Couple this with my belief about STC: Collectively we have all of the knowledge, but individually, none of us do. This means you are the keeper of a piece of this collective knowledge. Let's share the wealth!

Yours in friendship and service,

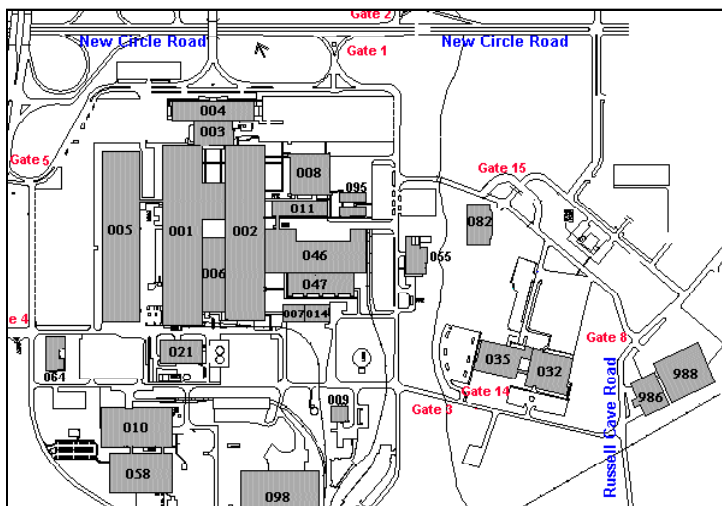
Mark Hanigan
STC President

Directions to the Upcoming Meeting



Louisville

AdWare is on the 10th floor of the Humana Waterside Building. The building occupies most of the block bordered by Brook, Main, First and Washington Streets, with entrances on both Washington and Main. There is on-street metered parking, if you can find a spot. Space may also be available in either of two parking garages, one on Washington Street between Brook and Floyd Streets, the other at First and Witherspoon (one block north of Washington).



Lexington

Meetings are videoconferenced from Lexmark's Building 032. To get to this building, follow New Circle Road past the Lexmark main entrance and turn right on Russell Cave Road. Just before the railroad tracks turn right. Building 032 is the first building on the right with a visitor's parking area in front of the building. Guests should let Joni Stowe know they are coming, see below, so she can have someone in the lobby to escort them to conference room L.

At Your Service

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September Meeting: September 21 from 5 to 7 p.m

We are meeting via videoconference.

Where: Lexington Lexmark, Inc. (map and detailed directions on page 7)
Host: Joni Stowe
740 New Circle Road at Newtown Pike

Louisville AdWare Systems, Inc.
Host: Linda Stein 10th Floor, Waterside Bldg.
101 East Main Street (between Brook and First Streets)

When: Arrive by 4:45 p.m. Videoconference begins at 5 p.m. Light supper provided at 6 p.m.

What: Lexmark's Information Development group took its first step from technical writing to usability engineering. Find out what they did and how they did it.

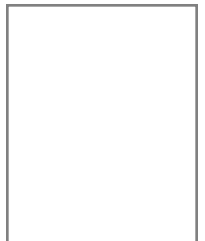
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Techniques

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